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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1345
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1423
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SUBJECT: MOSQUE SERMONS FROM SAUDI ARABIA - APRIL 7:
DENUNCIATION OF THE "OTHERS," PROPHET'S MESSAGE GREATEST
EVENT IN HUMAN HISTORY, PRAYER FOR SAUDI KING

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana Gfoeller, for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

FROM THE EASTERN PROVINCE: NO CELEBRATIONS EVEN FOR THE
PROPHET AND AN ATTACK ON THE "OTHERS"

¶1. (C) On April 7, Imam Shaikh al-Qahtani devoted most of his sermon at the Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal Mosque to the usual religious matters. As an adherent to the rigid Hanbali School of Islam, the imam criticized the practice of celebrating the birthday of the Prophet. However, after the normal religious admonitions, al-Qahtani launched an aggressive attack on "what he called... 'them' and 'they,' which the source interpreted as meaning secularists, liberals and pro-Western Muslims." As an example, the imam asserted "the Prophet died and was born on the same date (day and month). He asked how 'they' could overcome the dilemma of what occasion to celebrate, death or birth." He also vigorously condemned employment of Gregorian dates to celebrate occasions. "They," he commented, "are nothing but a bunch of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim people who continue to work hand-in-hand with Islam's foes for the destruction of the Muslim faith."

FROM MECCA: THE MESSAGE WAS THE GREATEST EVENT IN HISTORY

¶2. (U) Speaking at the Holy Mosque in Mecca on April 7, Imam Shaykh Abd-al-Rahman al-Sudays assured the congregation that receiving the Prophet's message was "the greatest event in humanity's history." He "saved the nation from 'nothingness' and exposed 'the other religions' falsehood and darkness." He praised Western thinkers who had recognized the Prophet's greatness and character.

¶3. (U) The imam revived the recent cartoon controversy in saying: "Despite his greatness and beauty, crowned with his noble character, traits, and perfection, which still radiates for those who love him, the prophet has been slandered and attacked by spiteful people who harbor black grudges against Islam and its Prophet.... In response, "the Islamic nation expressed its anger and further closed its ranks." The imam asked Muslims "to stand by their prophet by following his steps and applying his teachings. He concluded with the prayer to "strengthen Islam and Muslims, raise the banner of Sunna, the nation and the religion," and "support mujahidin in Palestine and the brothers in Iraq."

FROM MEDINA: TRADITIONAL SERMON ENDS WITH PRAYER TO DESTROY
THE ENEMIES OF THE ISLAMIC RELIGION AND FOR THE KING'S SUCCESS

¶4. (U) Shaykh Abd al-Bari al-Thubati offered a traditional sermon at the Holy Mosque in Medina on April 7. He related the story of the tribulations accompanying the Prophet's migration to Medina as the event differentiating "between good and bad and turned Muslims' weakness into strength and their humility into power." The imam ended with a prayer asking God to "destroy the enemies of the religion, and give safety to this country and the other Islamic countries." He also asked success for the Saudi monarch.
Gfoeller